

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In order to provide third party verification of the content and delivery of an electronic message such as an e-mail, a server receives the e-mail intended to be sent or forwarded to a specified addressee, and "tags" the message to indicate that it is "registered" with the provider of the service. The server then establishes a direct telnet  
5 connection with the addressee's Mail User Agent (MUA), and transmits the tagged e-mail to the addressee's MUA, as well as to the MUA's of any other addressees. After receiving responses from the receiving MUA's that the message was successfully received, the server then creates and forwards to the message originator an electronic receipt. The receipt includes one or more, and preferably all of, the following: the  
10 original message including any original attachments; a delivery success/failure table listing which addressee's MUA's successfully received the message and at what time, and for which MUA's there was a delivery failure; and a digital signature corresponding to the message and attachments. By receiving the receipt at a later date and verifying that the digital signature matches the message and related information, the operators of the  
15 system can provide independent third party verification that the receipt is a genuine product of their system and that the information pertaining to content and delivery of the message is accurate, without the need to archive either the original message or the receipt.